

and the General Services Administration. The deferral affects the Social Security Administration.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

February 10, 1997.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 11. The report detailing the proposed rescissions and deferral was published in the *Federal Register* on February 21.

Remarks on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

February 11, 1997

The President. In the State of the Union Address I asked the Congress to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform by July the Fourth, and I pointed out that delay would mean the death of reform, as it has in the last several years. I am very pleased to welcome to the White House today this bipartisan group of House Members who are now all cosponsors of the Shays-Meehan legislation. They are coming together in a bipartisan way to limit the influence of money in our campaigns for Congress and in financing the political parties and to level the playing field.

And I feel very, very strongly that they have done a good thing for our country. I am supporting their efforts very strongly, and I want to do whatever I can to work with them to help this legislation pass.

As soon as I leave here I'm going up to the Hill to a meeting of the bipartisan leadership of Congress, to which the Speaker and Senator Lott invited me after the State of the Union. And this is one of the issues I intend to raise there. I'm very encouraged by what I've heard here today, and we're determined to go forward.

Mr. Vice President.

[At this point, the Vice President, Representative Christopher Shays, and Representative Martin T. Meehan made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you all.

Q. Isn't this blocking the barn after the horse has gone?

The President. No. How can you say that? There will be a whole set of new elections up. There are elections in '98; there are elections in 2000; there are elections in 2002. I hope there will be elections 200 years from now.

Q. Is this all a product of lessons learned from the last campaign?

The President. No. Most of these people have wanted to do this for many years. Keep in mind, we had—in each of the last 4 years we had a serious campaign finance reform effort that died because of the parliamentary procedures in the Senate which permit 40 plus 1 to block a vote and because we didn't have more of this. I think this is the most important thing. The House is staking out a position—these Members are—that they're going to try to reach not only across party lines but across philosophical lines. I mean, just look around this table here and you'll see people who differ on a lot of substantive issues but want to change the rules by which they work in the public interest. That's really, to me, the most encouraging thing.

If you look around this table you see not only party difference, you see people from every region in our country, you see people who are in various different positions on the substance of most of the major issues facing us. But they are united in wanting to change the rules. And I think that there can be an engine of bipartisan and grassroots reform here that we have not seen before. People have wanted to do this for a long time, but I think they've got a chance to break through the last dam and get the job done. And I'm going to support them every way I can.

O.J. Simpson Civil Trial

Q. Mr. President, how disturbing is it to you that black and white jurors and black and white Americans in general viewed the same evidence in the O.J. Simpson trial but came generally to drastically different conclusions?

The President. Well, first of all, as to the jury verdict, I have nothing to add to what I said after the last jury verdict. We have a system here in this country which I think we should all respect. The only people who heard all the evidence were the people who were sitting in the jury box, in both cases. And civil trials and criminal trials are very different in different ways. So I have nothing to add to that. I respect the jury verdict.

And in terms of the way Americans see the world differently, generally based on their race, that troubles me, and I spoke about it at some length at the University of Texas last year when we had the Million Man March here in Washington, and I was down there. I think the only answer to that is for us to spend more time listening to each other and try to put ourselves in each other's shoes and understand why we see the world in different ways and keep trying to overcome that.

I would say that even though it's disturbing, we have succeeded so far in managing the world's most multiethnic, diverse democracy better than a lot of countries that are smaller than we are with fewer differences within them. And we just—this is a work that's never done—that our different attitudes, our different viewpoints in some ways are the great strength of America, but if they're too—if we're too estranged, if the divide is too great, then we can't hold the country together. And we just have

to keep working on it. And I intend to—I've worked on it hard for 4 years; we're talking about what else we might do.

But in terms of the jury verdict, that's the system we have in America. It's over as far as I'm concerned. We need to get on with other things. But we always need to be working to try to bridge these divides between us.

Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, what are you hoping to achieve in the budget talks today? What are you hoping to achieve in budget talks this morning?

The President. The next step of what we talked about—what I talked about at the State of the Union. I think we have got an enormous opportunity here to do great things together, because I think there is a consensus all across the country and among both parties that we have a lot of great challenges, some significant, indeed, unparalleled opportunities. And the whole system is kind of tending toward movement instead of paralysis again. And that's a good thing for America. And I'm going to do what I can to keep it going this morning.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House prior to a meeting with bipartisan congressional cosponsors of the "Campaign Reform Act of 1997."

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

February 11, 1997

First, I want to thank Senator Lott for hosting this. I thank the Speaker and Senator Lott and the leadership for inviting us to come down here and meet with the bipartisan leadership today. I think it's a very important first step after the State of the Union Address. It indicates we want to work together.

We'll discuss a lot of issues, I'm sure. I just want to emphasize, too, I think it's imperative that we pass a bipartisan balanced budget this year. And I think it's imperative that we find a way to work together on education reform, and we'll be talking about how we can do that.

There are many other things, but I want to emphasize those two above all.

The reception that I received in Maryland yesterday was a reception for the importance of education standards and educational opportunity in America as we move into this new century. And so I'm optimistic, I'm hopeful, and I'm gratified to be invited to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the President's Bill Signing Room at the Capitol. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.